



SENATOR RUNNER'S WEEK IN REVIEW

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Governor's Education Reform Proposal Heard in Senate Education Committee

By State Senator George Runner

The Governor's proposal to reward teachers for excellence was heard in the Senate Education Committee on Wednesday, February 22. The committee allowed for a full hearing on the failings of the current system. Proponents and opponents to the Governor's legislation had the opportunity to fully articulate their positions.

After a two-hour debate, I believed that there were areas of common ground and asked that the bill be held in committee while we tried to come to an agreement.

The goal of the legislation is to provide more local control for districts to address the needs of their students. The current system is very rigid where employment decisions are made based on seniority. The Governor's proposal would provide flexibility for districts to make employment decisions based on the needs of the students and on teachers' performance. Performance would be locally defined by each school district, as every district is unique with a unique population of students that they serve.

Many of our low-performing schools have teachers that are often inexperienced and paid less, while teachers in higher performing schools receive higher salaries and are more experienced. This is the consequence of our current system. The Governor's education reform proposal would be a tool to let the school districts decide what's best for their students, not Sacramento.

This proposal has also garnered significant public support, according to the February 22 Field Poll, which found that 60 percent of registered voters support pay being tied with performance.

The other portion of the Governor's proposal focuses on tenure. Currently, teachers after they are employed for two consecutive years become permanent employees. The debate in the Senate Education Committee from both Democrats and Republicans was that two years is not long enough to achieve permanent employee status. It is extremely difficult to remove even the most egregiously incompetent teachers after they receive permanent employee status. Districts have reported spending \$70,000 to \$300,000 to remove a grossly incompetent teacher.

This forces school districts to decide after reviewing a teacher's performance for only 18 months whether to let them go or to gamble, grant them permanent employee status, and hope it works out. With the shortage of teachers especially teachers in low-performing schools, most school districts take the risk.

The Governor's proposal provides more time for a school district to review and work with a teacher. If a teacher has potential but is very inexperienced, they would have time to mentor them. If the teacher still does not improve, then the district can part ways with them, instead of keeping them as a permanent employee.

News of the Week

[Governor Introduces GoCalifornia Package](#)

[Performance-Based System Debated
in Senate Education Committee](#)

[Voters Back Governor's Reform Proposals](#)

[Santa Paula Airport Crumbles into Santa Clara River](#)

[Resolution by Senator Runner to Adopt
California Space Day Passes State Senate](#)

[Briefing Report: Fuel Economy Standards](#)

[Sex Offender Pierces Teens Illegally –
Without Parental Consent](#)

[Education Study: California's Hidden Teacher Spending Gap](#)

The Senate Education Committee hearing was informative and it was a great opportunity to have the different sides of the issue present their views. I look forward to continue working with the Governor as well as the Senate Education Committee on the areas where we have common ground. Its time to address our current system's failings and give school districts the power to make the decisions necessary to meet the needs of their students.

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